

Legal Aid of Nebraska

Pandemic and Influenza
Response Plan

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Overview

Legal Aid of Nebraska (LAN) is responsible for providing legal services to low income persons in the State of Nebraska. Pandemic Influenza, depending on its severity, could disrupt the continuity of operations and provision of essential services.

If Pandemic Influenza spreads to Nebraska, a high absentee rate of LAN employees is anticipated. This includes sick employees, employees who are caring for sick family members, employees who are caring for children whose schools or day cares have been closed, and employees who do not come to work out of fear of becoming ill. In addition, there may be a significant need for social distancing (a reduction in the number of persons concentrated in the workplace), meaning that some employees may need to work offsite, in a different LAN office or outside of regular business hours.

Emergency staffing may be necessary in order to provide essential services and other services to our clients.

The plan that follows is divided into five sections. The first (1) details the functional priorities – both mission-critical and essential-but-interruptible – for the program overall. The second (2) details lines of succession, functional priorities, and essential staff at LAN’s administration level. The third (3) provides the same categories of information for LAN’s branch offices. A fourth (4) section outlines strategies the Program expects to take in order to reduce/prevent the spread of disease and a concluding section (5) provides information on absences and timekeeping due to a pandemic flu.

Each office is required to have a local plan in place in case of a pandemic flu.

LAN anticipates employee absences due to employee illness, family illness, community containment measures and quarantines and school/business and public transportation closures. If you are ill or experiencing symptoms (e.g. cough or sore throat, and fever), you should stay home and contact your Senior Attorney to arrange coverage of work or arrangements to work at home if able. The CDC recommends workers not return to work until at least 24 hours after their fever has resolved.

1. Legal Aid of Nebraska Service Priorities

Mission-Critical Functions

In the event of an emergency requiring the suspension of any LAN operation, LAN will make every effort to avoid interruption in the delivery of client services considered mission-critical. This category includes the following:

- Trials
- AccessLine™ Hotline
- Administrative hearings
- Family law matters including:
 - Protection Order hearings
 - Domestic violence hearings

- Civil, domestic, and vulnerable adult temporary restraining orders

Mission-Critical Operations

LAN anticipates that minimum operations (i.e., delivery of the mission-critical functions described above) could be provided for as follows:

Function	Location
AccessLine hotline	Omaha and limited remote access
Case work, research, etc.	Work from home or other LAN office, if appropriate
Local intake	Direct all intake AccessLine

Essential (but interruptible) Functions

LAN accepts that, as conditions warrant, some interruption in the delivery of client services may be required; however, any interruption should be limited. The duration of an acceptable interruption will vary according to circumstances.

The essential but interruptible functions category includes the following:

- Intake of new cases
- Reception
- Extended representation; trials, hearings etc.

No one service in this category takes precedence over another. All essential but interruptible services are considered to be of equal importance

LAN Partners/Other Organizations

LAN works closely with numerous partner organizations in delivering legal services. LAN will work closely with these organizations to ensure effective coordination between the partner organizations in the event of a flu pandemic. In addition, LAN will work closely with our insurance brokers, our contracted healthcare providers, and other social service agencies that we deal with on a regular basis.

2. LAN Administration

Authority / Lines of Succession

Central Authority

- Executive Director
- Deputy Director
- CFO
- Director of Litigation

- Director of AccessLine
- Omaha Managing Attorney
- Advocacy Coordinators
- Senior Attorneys

Public Information / Communications

Responsibility for communicating program-wide information to the public runs with the ‘Central Authority’ line of succession. The highest-ranking authority available for decision-making also will take responsibility for handling communications aimed at the public-at-large. This includes communications regarding:

- Office closure or relocation
- Suspension of specified services, i.e.: AccessLine™, intake, clinics, etc.

Mission-Critical Functions

Accounting Services

The following Administrative Services functions are considered mission-critical; Administrative staff capable of delivering each function is noted:

- Payroll – this function can be performed by most accounting staff thru cross-training
- Mail/Delivery – this function can be performed by all staff
- Accounts Payable- this function can be performed by most accounting staff thru cross- training

Human Resources

Human Resources function is considered mission-critical; HR questions can be addressed to:

- Director of Administration, Director of Advocacy, Director of Finance, Payroll Assistant

Information/Technology Services (IT)

Most Information Services functions are considered mission-critical. These include:

- Database maintenance (PIKA)
- Desktop/network support

There is some cross-training of IT staff and the Deputy Director, however, when someone is out, their areas of special knowledge may go uncovered. A consulting group has been retained to offer backup support remotely.

Essential (but Interruptible) Functions

Accounting/Purchasing Services

The following Administrative functions could be interrupted for brief periods of time, as needed; Administrative staff capable of delivering each function are noted:

- Purchasing – this function can be performed by the Deputy Director, CFO, Accounting Manager or Legal assistants
- Revenue and budgets – this function is performed by the CFO or the ED
- Accounts Payable – this function can be performed by accounting staff
- Bank accounts- can be accessed by specified staff locally and in Omaha

3. Office Operations

How LAN offices operate will depend on what the level is assigned to the situation by central administration in consultation with the Managing Attorney. See **LAN Local Office Pandemic Flu Response Plan (in development)**.

Authority / Lines of Succession

Senior Management

- Executive director
- Deputy Director
- Director of Litigation
- Director of AccessLine™
- Managing Attorney

Communications

Program operations will be assessed each morning.

Office Staff – client related functions

As conditions change, staff will first take responsibility for communicating with the Managing Attorney. If unable to come to work, other identified staff will then be responsible for communication with individual clients regarding scheduling changes and other logistical matters. This will include, but is not limited to, the following types of communication:

- Notifying clients and interpreters if events are canceled or scheduling changes
- Notifying attorneys and agency partners regarding calendar and schedule changes

To the extent practicable, staff will let clients know how best to access information as conditions change whether by phone, website, etc.

Information Services - Phones/Websites/Intranet

During a Pandemic, website maintenance is considered mission-critical. **The admin site on www.legalaidofnebraska.com** (LAN's intranet) will become a focal point for program information. Cross training should occur for this site. Auto-attendant recordings on the office phone systems can be changed daily to reflect closures, shortened hours, etc. The webmaster and key staff/admin have the ability to update the self-help websites remotely.

Use of Conference Call numbers/GoToMeetings

In order to protect confidential home phone numbers, staff working at home should use conference call numbers to communicate with clients, etc. All numbers are listed on the Admin site. Staff and other meetings should occur remotely over GoToMeetings, video conference or conference call to minimize person to person contact. Directions for setting up a GoToMeeting session are on the Admin site.

Remote Access to networks

Limited remote access to LAN computer networks will be made possible through a VPN connection from home computers on a case by case basis. AccessLine™ remote connections to the phone queue will be made available to at least 8 advocates or more if additional licenses are purchased. The case management system, PIKA, is web based and accessible at any time with a fast internet connection. Web access to Outlook (email and calendars) is also readily available. (For more information, see “Working from Home” in the Local Office Response Plan)

Emergency Communications

Each office should set up a local Emergency Communications plan.

Mission-Critical Functions

Office Operations – Attorneys/Paralegals/Legal Assistants

Coordination for attorneys (e.g., checking calendars, searching for other LAN attorneys to fill in on a case, etc.) is likely to be of critical importance during a pandemic event. Staff must be available to provide this function.

For the most part, staff should be cross-trained within individual offices or units. Whoever reports to work will prioritize that office or unit’s mission-critical functions, triage cases, contact the court regarding the need for continuances, check the calendars of staff who are out, and notify parties, interpreters, etc. It is essential the office calendar be kept up to date.

Senior Management

At least one person from the Senior Management line of succession should be available in Omaha or by phone at all times.

Alternate / Retired Staff Who Could Assist in a Crisis

- Office temps
- Interpreters familiar with the office
- Retired staff – attorney and support

4. Prevention

The Program will do its best to slow or prevent the spread of pandemic flu, should a pandemic arise. The Program will focus its efforts in the following ways.

Education

Prior to the onset of a pandemic event, the Program will work to educate staff about the flu and ways to prevent its spread. This will include the following efforts:

- Making Public Health materials available to staff regarding office and at-home preparedness and care
- Disseminating literature relating to pandemic flu and prevention
- Hanging posters on preventative practices in the event of a pandemic
- Placing information on the Program's Admin site
- Reminding staff of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help deal with fear, anxiety, stress, etc.
- Links will be placed on the Admin site to CDC, local and state public health authorities and related websites to keep staff up to date on pandemic information.

Sanitation

During a flu period and pandemic event, the Program advises employees to do the following while at work:

- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing, using tissues or the crook of the elbow instead of the hands;
- Dispose of tissues in the trash after use;
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or with a hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available;
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people;
- If you get sick, stay home and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them; avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth;
- Hand sanitizer should be available at all LAN offices especially in kitchens and interview rooms;
- Doorknobs should be wiped down with sanitary wipes a number of times a day during heavy flu outbreak or pandemic periods;
- Frequently touched common surfaces such as coffee pots, kitchen counters, faucets, telephones, computers, etc should be wiped down daily;
- Public health posters should be posted in waiting rooms in various languages informing people of ways to avoid the flu and stay healthy;
- Avoid shaking hands and always wash your hands after physical contact with others.

Social Distancing

During a pandemic event, social distancing will reduce person to person exposure. The Program will:

- Limit the number of non-essential staff in offices.(i.e. law students, volunteers, and limited contract personnel)
- Look for opportunities to allow staff to work offsite or off regular business hours to reduce direct contact between staff
- Limit in person staff exchange between offices, as appropriate.
- Limit in office client meetings if possible
- Use conference calls, video conferencing and GoToMeetings for meetings
- Limit travel to areas with high exposure risk
- Staff that become ill with influenza-like symptoms during the work day should be separated from other workers and asked to go home promptly. When possible, workers with influenza-like illness should be given a surgical mask to wear if they cannot be placed in an area away from others pending their departure.

The Program also will look to the Public Health Department for guidance in all areas of pandemic flu prevention.

5. Employee Absences, Sick Leave and Compensation during a Pandemic

In the event of a Pandemic, LAN anticipates employee absences due to illness, community containment measures, quarantines and school/business and public transportation closures.

- If sick, contact your Managing Attorney to arrange coverage of work or if applicable, to work at home.
- Staff who have influenza-like symptoms (e.g. cough or sore throat, and fever) are recommended to stay home and not come to work until at least 24 hours after their fever has resolved. (CDC recommendation).
- CDC recommends that workers who appear to have an influenza-like illness upon arrival or become ill during the day be promptly separated from other workers and be advised to go home until at least 24 hours after they are free of fever (100° F [37.8° C] or greater), or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Staff who are well but who have an ill family member at home with influenza can come to work as usual. However, these employees should monitor their health every day, and notify their supervisor and stay home if they become ill.
- An employee who misses work due to illness should use sick time, vacation time and comp time. If all of these have been used up, and it is to the benefit of the

program that the ill employee stay or go home, administrative paid leave may apply. This policy is not intended to limit or replace employee rights and benefits available under other program policies or law

- If the office is closed due to a pandemic, staff will be paid as normal. (See Temporary Office closure policy in the Personnel Manual).